

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 17, 2017

The Honorable David J. Shulkin  
Secretary  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin,

We write today regarding the current state of Electronic Health Record (EHR) modernization efforts within the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). Specifically, we are concerned that the VA may seek to upgrade its existing health record system, the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA), rather than adopt a seamless, consolidated system with the Department of Defense (DoD.)

On February 15, 2017, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) re-designated VA Health Care a “high-risk area” in need of additional Congressional oversight and leadership, principally in the area of IT acquisitions. GAO also recommended that both the VA and DoD would be well advised to move to a single, integrated system. On February 7, 2017, GAO testified that “VA needs to let go of VistA and go with the commercial solution,” and that they “see no justification for VA and DoD pursuing separate systems.”

As of February 2017, the DoD has successfully implemented their first operational site with a major COTS EHR system, while the VA has indicated they intend to upgrade and possibly replace components of their existing system. In his recent testimony before the House Veteran Affairs Committee, Mr. Rob Thomas, Acting Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer for the VA, stated that the Department may be willing to pursue a COTS system. Other aspects of his testimony, however, suggested that it was the VA’s intention to simply integrate commercial elements into its existing VistA system rather than acquire a COTS system in tandem with the DoD. We are also concerned that VA may seek to acquire or create a “commercialized VistA” system, rather than an existing major COTS EHR as DoD and nearly every major medical care provider in the United States has done or is in the process of doing.

We have an obligation to ensure that veterans experience consistent quality care. The best way to achieve continuity in health information for veterans is through a unitary and seamless electronic healthcare record with DoD. We urge you to work with DoD to implement an existing COTS EHR which will ensure complete records and continuity for transitioning service members.

We thank you for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



**Ann McLane Kuster**  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



**Jack Bergman**  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



**Beto O'Rourke**  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity



**Mike Coffman**  
Member of Congress

Cc:

The Honorable Paul Ryan, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Phil Roe, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans Affairs  
The Honorable Tim Walz, Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans Affairs